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Al-Qaeda Suspect Arrested in Deadly Marrakesh Bombing

Moroccan Response to Bombing Shows Deep Commitment to Human Rights Protection

Washington, DC (May 6)—The lead suspect arrested by Morocco in its ongoing investigation of the deadly April 28 terrorist bombing in Marrakesh has been linked to al-Qaeda, according to a report by Morocco's Interior Ministry. The terrorist bombing at Café Argana in Marrakesh's central square killed 17 people—most of them Europeans—and injured 20.

World leaders, including UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy have condemned the bombing. Morocco has won praise for its thoroughness and restraint in investigating the bombing.

Three Moroccan suspects were arrested in Safi, 220 miles south of Casablanca. The lead suspect, who was "linked to Al-Qaeda," had "made two explosive devices, which were triggered from a distance" by mobile phone, said the Interior Ministry. He "chose the Argana cafe because it is popular with Moroccan and foreign tourists."

Investigators found the suspects learned how to make the bombs on the Internet and "were absorbed by jihadist ideology," with "allegiance to al-Qaeda, and had already made several attempts to join some of the hotbeds of tension," including Chechnya and Iraq, before deciding to carry out their attack in Morocco.

Immediately following the attack, King Mohammed VI called for respect for "the primacy of the rule of law" and vowed that the bombing wouldn't derail Morocco's new program of constitutional reforms, which he outlined in a speech to the nation on March 9.

Earlier this week, Moroccan Islamists said they felt reassured that authorities acted with restraint and did not carry out mass arrests as they did in the wake of 2003 attacks, reported AFP. A leader of the Islamic opposition noted the contrast with the reaction following the 2003 Casablanca bombings that killed 45 people, when hundreds of Islamists were arrested.

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2011 MAY 17 PM 3:40